بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

A TREATISE IN DEFENCE OF

SAYYIDATUNA ‘AAISHAH AS-SIDDIQAH

رَضِيَ اللّٰهُ تَعَالٰي عَ هَا

Umm al-Mu’minin, Mother of the Believers

A Sunni Response to Shi‘i Allegations Concerning Her Honour, Her Standing, and Her Legacy of Sacred Knowledge

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Preface

This treatise is written as a defence of Sayyidatuna ‘Aaishah as-Siddiqah, the beloved wife of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and the daughter of Sayyiduna Abu Bakr as-Siddiq رضي الله عنه. It is offered in the sincere hope of clarifying, from within the Sunni tradition, why her rank among the believers is regarded as second only to Sayyidatuna Khadijah and Sayyidatuna Fatimah, and why the allegations that certain Shi‘i polemicists have levelled against her honour, her judgement, and her narrations are, from the standpoint of the Qur’an, the sound Hadith, and the consensus of the early community, without foundation.

The author writes as a proud son of a family that has, across four generations, held fast to the beliefs and practices of Ahl as-Sunnah wa’l-Jama‘ah: Dr. Calingalan Hussin Caluang, son of Imam Hji Al-Hassan Caluang, son of Imam Hji Yahya Caluang, son of the Tausug hero Captain Kalingalan Caluang Al-Hassan Al-Hussaini. It is offered not out of hostility toward any people, but out of love for a woman whom the Prophet ﷺ himself loved above all his wives, and whom the Qur’an itself declared innocent by direct revelation.

I. Her Rank Among the Believers

The wives of the Prophet ﷺ are described in the Sunni tradition as flowers of a single garden, each possessing her own beauty and fragrance, yet one flower — the rose — is held to surpass the rest in loveliness. In the same way, every one of the Ummahat al-Mu’minin was a woman of the highest sanctity, yet ‘Aaishah رضي الله عنها is held by the great commentators to have surpassed them all specifically in the depth and range of her sacred learning.

The Prophet ﷺ himself is reported to have said that if the knowledge of every woman of this Ummah, together with the knowledge of all his own wives, were gathered into one scale, the knowledge of ‘Aaishah رضـي اللـه عنها would still outweigh it.

Majma‘ az-Zawa’id, vol. 9, p. 289, Hadith 15318

She narrated well over two thousand ahadith, placing her among the small handful of Companions — alongside Abu Hurairah, ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar, and Anas ibn Malik رضي الله عنهم — through whom the largest portion of the Prophetic Sunnah has reached later generations. Her nephew ‘Urwah ibn az-Zubayr رضي الله عنهما testified that, apart from jurisprudence and Hadith, no one possessed greater

command of Arabic poetry than she did, and that she was besides a recognised authority in medicine.

Seerat-e-Mustafa, pp. 661–662; ‘Umdat al-Qari, vol. 1, p. 38

Sayyiduna Abu Musa al-Ash‘ari رضـــي اللـــه عنه recalled that whenever the Companions of the Prophet encountered a difficulty they could not resolve, they would bring the matter to ‘Aaishah رضي الله عنها and receive its answer from her.

Sunan at-Tirmidhi, vol. 5, p. 371, Hadith 3909

The great jurist Mufti Ahmad Yar Khan رحمة الله تعالى عليه observed that no woman has ever been born who combined scholarship and jurisprudence to the degree that ‘Aaishah رضي الله عنها did, calling her an encyclopaedia of Qur’anic and Hadith learning in her own right.

Mir’at al-Manajih, vol. 8, p. 505

II. The Qur’anic Exoneration: A Divine Seal Upon Her Honour

The single most decisive fact in any discussion of Sayyidatuna ‘Aaishah’s رضي الله عنها honour is that her innocence was not established merely by the testimony of Companions or the ruling of a judge — it was declared directly by Allah عز وجل in the Qur’an itself, in Surah an-Nur (24:11–20), following the slander raised against her by hypocrites after the expedition in which she had been inadvertently left behind and later escorted back to Medina.

For any Muslim — Sunni or Shi‘i — to entertain the accusation that was raised against her is, in effect, to entertain the possibility that a Companion whom Allah Himself exonerated by revelation was nonetheless guilty. The Sunni position holds this to be a theological impossibility: were she truly guilty, Allah would not have sent down verses of the Qur’an, recited in every mosque until the Day of Judgement, proclaiming her chastity. Her exoneration is therefore not a matter of historical opinion but of settled Qur’anic text, and no later report — however it is transmitted — can be permitted to override it.

It is on this ground that Sunni scholarship has always regarded any narrative casting doubt upon her character, wherever such narratives originate, as fundamentally irreconcilable with the plain text of the Qur’an.

III. On the Allegations Raised in Shi‘i Polemic

1. The Question of the Battle of the Camel

Shiʿi polemicists frequently cite Sayyidatuna ʿAaishah's رضي الله عنها presence at the Battle of the Camel, where she stood among those who opposed Sayyiduna ʿAli رضي الله عنه following the murder of Sayyiduna ʿUthman رضي الله عنه, as grounds to diminish her standing or to portray her as an enemy of the Prophet's household. The Sunni response addresses this on two levels.

First, her involvement arose from a sincere, if ultimately regretted, exercise of independent judgement (ijtihad) concerning the pursuit of justice for ʿUthman رضي الله عنه, not from personal enmity toward ʿAli رضي الله عنه or his family. She herself, in her later years, wept whenever the events of that day were mentioned and is widely reported to have expressed deep sorrow over her role in it. A believer who errs in ijtihad while striving sincerely toward what she believes is right is not, in Sunni theology, thereby stripped of her faith or her rank; this is the same principle by which the Companions on both sides of that conflict are shown honour and neither side is cursed.

Second, both ʿAli and ʿAaishah رضي الله عنهما remained, after the battle, mutually respectful. ʿAli رضي الله عنه personally ensured her safe and honourable return to Medina, an act incompatible with the notion that he regarded her as an apostate or an enemy of the faith. The dispute between them was political and circumstantial, not doctrinal, and Sunni scholarship has never treated it as evidence against her chastity, her sincerity, or her rank as a Mother of the Believers.

2. Renewed Attacks on Her Chastity

As shown above, this matter was closed by divine revelation in Surah an-Nur. Any later narration — regardless of the chain through which it is transmitted or the sect that transmits it — that contradicts an explicit ruling of the Qur'an is rejected outright in Sunni methodology. A hadith, however it is graded, cannot be permitted to override a verse of the Qur'an; this is a foundational principle of Sunni usul al-fiqh, and it applies here with full force.

3. The Claim That She Opposed Ahl al-Bayt

Sunni scholarship holds that the wives of the Prophet ﷺ are themselves included among Ahl al-Bayt, as indicated by the address of Surah al-Ahzab (33:33), which speaks directly to the Prophet's ﷺ wives immediately before the verse of purification. Far from standing outside the Prophet's household, ʿAaishah رضي الله عنها was, by the plain wording of the Qur'an, a member of it — and it was in her own home that the Prophet ﷺ spent his final illness, and in her own room that he was buried.

Her deep affection for the Prophet’s family is documented extensively: she transmitted narrations concerning Sayyidatuna Fatimah رضي الله عنها, cared for members of the household, and is recorded as having wept with grief at the mention of Sayyidatuna Khadijah رضي الله عنها, out of love and admiration rather than rivalry. The portrayal of her as an inherent adversary of the Prophet’s family finds no support in the accepted Sunni sources.

4. Rejection of Her Narrations

Some polemicists dismiss the many ahadith she transmitted on the basis of the political disputes discussed above. Sunni scholarship responds that the authenticity of a narration is judged by the reliability, memory, and moral uprightness (‘adalah) of its narrator, not by later political events unconnected to the narration itself. ‘Aaishah رضـي اللــه عنها was renowned even among her contemporaries for an exceptional memory — evidenced, for instance, by the occasion on which she precisely repeated to the Prophet lines of feverish, half-intelligible poetry she had heard from her ailing father, word for word, despite not understanding their meaning at the time. On matters of the Prophet’s private life and household practice, she remains, in the Sunni view, an irreplaceable and uniquely positioned witness.

IV. Her Life as Teacher, Jurist, and Guide to the Ummah

Beyond matters of dispute, the enduring legacy of Sayyidatuna ‘Aaishah رضي الله عنها is that of a teacher without equal. Her home in Medina became a school in its own right, attended by men and women — by some accounts, more women than men — who travelled from distant places to sit before her and learn. Her nephew ‘Urwah ibn az-Zubayr and ‘Amrah bint ‘Abd ar-Rahman رضي الله عنهما were counted among her most distinguished students, and ‘Amrah is said to have served as her secretary, receiving and answering correspondence addressed to her.

She was consulted on some of the most technically demanding questions of Islamic law, including matters of inheritance requiring precise mathematical reasoning, and she is counted among the earliest jurists of Islam, alongside figures such as ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab, ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib, and ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abbas رضي الله عنهم. Al-Ahnaf, a contemporary observer, remarked that in a lifetime of hearing the speeches of Abu Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthman, ‘Ali, and the caliphs who followed them, he had never heard speech more eloquent or more persuasive than that of ‘Aaishah رضي الله عنها.

> *“Learn a portion of your religion from this red-hued lady.”*

> *— the Prophet ﷺ, referring to Sayyidatuna ‘Aaishah رضي الله عنها*

The Prophet ﷺ affectionately called her al-Humaira’ — “the red-hued one” — and this same hadith, urging the Ummah to seek religious knowledge from her, stands as one of the clearest Prophetic endorsements of a woman's authority in Islamic learning to be found anywhere in the Sunni corpus.

V. Conclusion

The case for honouring Sayyidatuna ‘Aaishah as-Siddiqah رضي الله عنها rests on the plainest of foundations: the Qur’an exonerated her by name; the Prophet ﷺ loved her above all his other wives and directed the Ummah to learn religion from her; and the generation of the Companions, on all sides of their later disputes, continued to seek her counsel and to honour her position as Umm al-Mu’minin. Political disagreements that arose late in her life, and which she herself came to regret, cannot be permitted to unsettle a rank that Allah and His Messenger ﷺ had already established by revelation and by praise given in her own lifetime.

It is the hope of this author, writing as a son of a family long devoted to the path of Ahl as-Sunnah wa’l-Jama‘ah, that this treatise may serve believers seeking clarity, and that the memory of Sayyidatuna ‘Aaishah رضي الله عنها — scholar, jurist, teacher, and beloved wife of the Prophet ﷺ — may be preserved among the Ummah with the honour it has always deserved.

و صلى الله على سيدنا محمد و على آله و صحبه وسلم

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General biographical material adapted from Dawat-e-Islami (dawateislami.net) and Imam Ghazali Publishing (imamghazali.org)